



EPA, EDA Assist Redevelopment Efforts in Smithville, Texas

SMITHVILLE, TX

Due in large part to the cooperation of two Federal agencies and the State of Texas Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP), a formerly contaminated metal fabrication plant in Smithville, Texas is now home to a furniture manufacturing company.

Before ceasing operations in 1990, the Marhil Manufacturing plant produced boat porthole covers and watertight doors for ships. In 1991, the owners of the contaminated three-acre Marhil property filed for bankruptcy and abandoned the site. Due to the site's prime location for industrial use, the City marshaled its resources toward cleaning up and redeveloping the property.

In February 1996, at the City's request, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began site assessments to determine the extent and nature of the property's contamination. Based on samples collected from waste drums, soils and foundry sand, EPA discovered xylene, lead, zinc and iron. EPA concluded that the site's contamination warranted additional resources from the Agency's Targeted Brownfields Assessment (TBA) program. The TBA program was designed to minimize the uncertainties surrounding the actual or perceived contamination on sites such as

JUST THE FACTS:

- In 1991, the owners of the contaminated three-acre Marhil Manufacturing property filed for bankruptcy and abandoned the site.
- Based on samples collected from waste drums, soils and foundry sand, EPA discovered xylene, lead, zinc and iron on the site.
- EPA assisted Smithville in acquiring aid from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce and its technical assistance program.
- A \$23,500 EDA grant and \$7,384 from the city funded an asbestos survey, blueprints for the buildings on the property, and a marketing plan to sell the property upon cleanup.

In addition to site assessment work, EPA assisted Smithville in acquiring aid from the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce. EPA also worked with the Texas Voluntary Cleanup Program, which provided cleanup assistance and a liability waiver.

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower states, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. EPA is funding: assessment demonstration pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to assess brownfields sites and to test cleanup and redevelopment models; job training pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to provide training for residents of communities affected by brownfields to facilitate cleanup of brownfields sites and prepare trainees for future employment in the environmental field; and, cleanup revolving loan fund programs (each funded up to \$500,000 over five years) to capitalize loan funds to make loans for the environmental cleanup of brownfields. These pilot programs are intended to provide EPA, states, tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

Marhil Manufacturing. Aside from site contamination, the buildings interiors were also found to be in disrepair. Workers discovered birds' nests in the rafters, holes in the roof, and uneven flooring.

In addition to its site assessment work, EPA assisted Smithville in acquiring aid from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce and its technical assistance program. EPA also worked with the Texas VCP, which provided cleanup assistance and a liability waiver. With a \$23,500 EDA grant and an additional \$7,384 in City monies, Smithville funded an asbestos survey, blueprints for the buildings on the property, and a marketing plan to sell the property upon cleanup. The partnership between EPA and EDA has developed into a working relationship that has fostered further collaboration between the organizations.

The City began cleanup in the summer of 1996. In March 1997, the City acquired the property through a tax foreclosure sale and on June 4, 1997, the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission issued a Certificate of Completion for the successful cleanup. City officials plan to keep the property in a structured lease for five-and-a-half years with the option to buy. A furniture panel manufacturer is currently operating on the entire property, and has created at least seven new jobs. After two years, the lessee will have the option to buy the property for its appraised value. Smithville plans to use the money acquired from leasing the cleaned property to fund further industrial and municipal developments in the City.

EPA Region 6—encompassing Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas—has received approximately \$1.4 million in brownfields site assessment funding to date, including \$81,883 in TBA funding from EPA. Seven Region 6 properties are currently targeted under the Targeted Brownfields Assessment program, and 14 others have had assessments completed. For more information on EPA's TBA program, contact Stan Hitt, EPA Region 6 Coordinator, at (214) 665-6736.

CONTACTS:

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Visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>

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